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Re-Methodologizing Research: Queer Considerations for Just Inquiry

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I go through the world with the wind at my back for the most part: white, American, educated, able-bodied, cisgender, middle-class, professional. As a queer-identified, Jewish (nonreligious) woman, I also occupy locations that are marginalized to varying degrees in varying contexts. When approaching any research project, it is important to me to remain cognizant of ways in which my age, class, and position as a professional represent privilege and authority to those participating in research with me. It is important to construct a research process that disrupts the opaqueness around issues of power and authority that typically are required by conventional research methods.

In this chapter, I describe a queer theory–informed,[1] constructionist research project that I facilitated with a group of queer youths. In Part 1, I discuss the philosophy, principles, and practices that guided this research and that inform a queer analysis of power. In Part 2, I tell the story of this research as an endeavor that brought to life the "doing" of power as a discursive achievement—that is, an exercise of power—I shared with the youths.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

The research focused on the question, "How do queer youths construct a queer identity within a homonormative context?" My intention was to center queer youths' experiences

[1] Queer theory is a set of critical practices intended to complicate hegemonic assumptions about the continuities between anatomical sex, gender identity, sexual identity, sexual object choice, and sexual practice. It rejects biological theories of sexual identity. For a useful introduction, please see Jagose (1996).

of identity by creating a queer space for conversations. I approached their insider knowledges as one of two discursive frames that I would draw on to articulate a queer therapeutic practice. The other discursive frame was that of academic literacies from queer and poststructural theories. The research attempts to bridge the gap between the practice of therapy and the bodies of scholarship generated within interdisciplinary fields of study such as queer theory and cultural studies (Tilsen, 2010). The research was done for my PhD program through the Taos Institute in collaboration with Tilburg University.[2] The program is explicitly focused on constructionist methods of inquiry and practice.

PART 1: FROM METHODOLOGY TO RE-METHODOLOGIZING

Power Is What We Do, Not What We Have

How is power conceptualized when engaging in queer theory–informed constructionist forms of inquiry? Constructionists are interested in language practices[3] and what people make together through their engagements (whether or not this making leads to something desired or planned). We view language as productive, not as merely descriptive. In other words, language does things (Austin, 1962). Power, then, is the capacity to proliferate discursive possibilities. As a nonessentialist, discursively focused frame, social construction understands power not as an attribute or commodity contained within a person or held by an institution; rather, power is about discourse, where discourse is understood as what gets to be said, by whom, with what authority, and with what effects.

Foucault (1970) defined *discourse* as a "social practice" that circulates through culture. Discourse acts as a governor on what may or may not be said and done. We cannot speak, think, feel, or act outside of the influence of discourse. Even resistance to the regulating effects of discourse gains its meaning through its relationship to discourse.

As a queer theory–informed poststructuralist, Foucault's work (1978a, 1978b, 1985, 1986; Gordon, 1980; Morris & Patton, 1988) is a major influence on my analysis of power. Foucault's conceptualization of power is notable for its opposition to the structuralist notion of power as being held by dominant groups in society. Rather, Foucault maintained that power is multidirectional and contextual. Power is deployed by people in particular situations and may produce new outcomes in the form of resistance to dominating discourses. Power is an action, something that is exercised and not possessed. One of the tenets of Foucault's (1978b) analysis is that "where there is power there is resistance" (p. 95). This notion in particular affords subjugated peoples participatory status in the production of meaningful discourse that gives visibility to their lived experiences while exposing oppressive social apparatus.

Although power is multidirectional and discursively produced, that does not mean that all exercises of power are equal in their scope and ability to exert social–political influence. Indeed, this is precisely why the Foucauldian analysis of discourse as power

[2] http://www.taosinstitute.net/phd-program; http://www.tilburguniversity.edu/

[3] Language practices are all embodied social interaction.

is compelling: It breathes meaning and possibility into both hegemonic and counterhegemonic exercises of power. By situating acts of resistance within the broader narrative of subjugating exercises of power, these often small acts may be read as significant and ripe with rhizomatic possibilities.[4]

Undoing Assumptions in Research

What are the implications for research when one is equipped with a Foucauldian analysis of power situated within a constructionist worldview? To begin with, I approach research with an eye toward disrupting conventional assumptions about research, knowledge, and truth. I view the Western scientific notion of research as one possible discursive frame—albeit an authoritative one—which may be questioned to create paths for new ways of understanding and making meaning in the world. This perspective unhinges ontological and epistemological assumptions of Western science, and thus makes room for other forms of inquiry. Research is revealed as culturally contingent, reflecting the local understandings and values of those involved (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Thus, I am interested in doing research that resonates culturally and ethically with the communities in which I engage.

Another assumption (within positivist and post-positivist research) is that the goal of research is to discover the objective truth about something. Constructionist inquiry is instead interested in giving voice to the multiple realities of peoples' lived experiences, whereby value is not placed on a singular truth but on consideration of the possibilities generated. Furthermore, constructionists acknowledge that inquiry is productive of new possibilities and that the very goal of research is to be generative, not definitive.

Finally, assumptions about methodology are exposed, leading to what I call "re-methodologizing": a reimagined fluid process that is informed by, and responsive to, the local values and experiences of research participants. Linguistically, moving from the static noun, "methodology" to the dynamic verb, "methodologizing" emphasizes the ongoing, emergent process of this inquiry.

What does this mean for the actual practice of research? It means positioning oneself as refusing to maintain fidelity to any particular methodology or protocol. My commitment is to my participants and to the facilitation of a conversational space that would allow them to bring as much of themselves as they want to bring to the process. Insisting on adherence to a methodology (that is created outside of the inquiry itself) would undermine the values that I seek to bring to this endeavor. These values include

- Accountability to relations of power: This means treating participants as experts in their lives and ensuring space for the performance of these knowledges. My commitment to upholding this value is informed, in part, by Foucault's (1978a,

[4] Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the metaphor of the rhizome (a root system of plants characterized by their underground, decentralized, horizontal shoots with multiple entryways) as a way to resist hierarchical, linear, and finite conceptualizations of identity, relationship, and making meaning. It is a common conceptual resource among post-structural practitioners and researchers.

1978b) critique of knowledge production based on systems of discipline and punishment. By attending to the power relations inherent in research, I am focused on finding ways to produce knowledge that resist disciplinary or confessional practices.

- Transparency: This means involving participants in my inner dialogue as well as situating my ideas and questions. Being transparent by making available to the research participants my ideas, plans, thoughts, and purposes is a practice of accountability.
- Self-reflexivity: This refers to what Parker (2005) described as "enthusiastic self-questioning rather than fanatical certainty" (p. 21). This is a contextualization and examination of what's going on within me so that I may make accountable decisions in the research process and in my relationships with the participants.
- Responsiveness: This means that I am providing respectful, relevant, non-tokenizing responses to participants' comments and concerns.
- Social poetics/conversational imagination: By allowing the process to unfold without the imposition of external methodological constraints (that is, constraints embodied within a methodology that is produced prior to and outside of the research conversation itself), the possibilities for a proliferation of identity performances, new knowledges, and emergent meanings gain freedom. McNamee (2000) stated, "to talk of the poetic is to give wing to the imaginative" (p. 146). Poetics is a crafting of new meanings, and social poetics points to how people create meaning together.

These principles serve as the ethical guidelines for my research encounters. At the center of these ethics is a decentering of expert knowledge to bring forward knowledge of the participants. McNamee (1994) pointed out that so-called research subjects are chosen because of their expertise in the area of inquiry. By intentionally making space that centers this expertise, I hope to acknowledge "that there are multiple forms of description" (p. 73) as I seek to construct an inquiry process in which the inevitability of my own descriptions are mitigated by the voices of the participants. Thus, constructing a discursive space that allows participants to bring the multiplicity of their voices to the conversation is essential to the ethical constitution of the inquiry process.

From Therapist to Researcher: Blurring the Lines of Practice

Another assumption that permeates conventional notions of research is that research is distinct from practice. As a therapist-cum-researcher, I sought ways to break this binaryto open up possibilities within both disciplines.

By specifically discussing research practices that blur the line between therapy and research, McNamee (1988, 1989, 2000) provided a useful link between the two domains. Contending that therapy, at its best, is a discovery process, and that research, at its best, provides a therapeutic experience, McNamee (2000) argued for a research that is free "from the constraints of traditional forms of practice" (p. 146). McNamee (2000) envisioned research that is relationally engaged, unencumbered by "specific techniques or

strategies that will produce valid research" (p. 148). Research becomes not a search for truth but a conversation through which participants perform multiple truths. Indeed, in terms of validity, McNamee (2000) asserted, "validity is an issue of the politics of the research (of the rhetoric within which it is constructed)." This articulation of research as intervention—and, more pointedly that "useful or generative research and useful or generative therapy are more similar to each other . . . than they are different" (McNamee & Tomm, 1986, p. 18) has provided me the conceptual support and methodological validation to engage in research in a manner consistent with my preferred ethics.

A relationally engaged process cannot be contained or constrained by predetermined methods. Smith (1999), Parker (2005), and Diversi and Moreira (2009) argued for the use of methodologies that originate from and are generated by the communities being researched. In McNamee's constructionist terms, this involves choosing a discursive frame for our research that is valid to the communities we are working with as they constitute validity. Constructionist research seeks to create ways of generating knowledge—as well as giving recognition to the kinds of knowledges that go unrecognized. The way that knowledge is generated and what is generated cannot be separated, as they exist in a recursive, discursive relationship. Imposing adherence to recognized methodologies is a colonial act that functions as a dividing practice (Foucault, 1965, 1973).[5] By unhinging research from the hegemonic hold of the received view of science (Woolgar, 1996),[6] an opportunity for other peoples, their ways of generating knowledge, and their ways of knowing may be created. By definition, any adherence to a methodology will always render fidelity to that methodology rather than to the individuals involved.

At the heart of such a process is an intentional undoing of conventional notions of power and positionality that define traditional research practices. By entering into a relational, dialogical process with others within a community that will have its own notions about and preferences for how we are positioned with power and authority, we are surrendering "the much-denied yet prevailing academic ideology of 'scholar knows best'" (Diversi & Moreire, 2009, p. 31). This undoing is facilitated by asking questions such as

- Who has the authority to ask research questions?
- Who has the authority to intrude into peoples' lives to do research?
- Who owns the concept of research?
- Who is granted the authority to name and claim some practices as legitimate research and others as illegitimate?
- Where does this authority to name and the power to define certain practices as research come from?

[5] Dividing practices are methods of objectification through social and spatial regulation that gain authority through the institutional power of science (or pseudoscience) and impose specifying identities on individuals. I am expanding on Foucault's original meaning here and arguing that those with the power to impose specifications on individuals also do so when some practices are deemed worthy of being called research while others are not. The consequence is that some knowledges are made invisible because of their lack of compliance with accepted methods.

[6] The received view of science refers to the Western post-Enlightenment tradition of empiricism and logical positivism.

By asking critical questions, thus exposing the dominant paradigm of research and its effects on people, constructionist research holds the promise of being radical and liberatory, subversive and transformative (Parker, 2005).

Resources for Liberatory Research

Constructionist philosophy and a Foucauldian analysis have opened the door to other theoretical resources that inform my approach to power relations. Looking outside of the traditional tropes of social science research provides both philosophical and methodological resources for a liberatory research pedagogy that centers discursive production as a means of exercising power. These are the very same resources that I had been engaged with as a therapist and educator for many years before I carried them into the research realm.

For example, youth–adult partnership approaches (Norman, 2001; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Lorens, 2001; Zeldin & Petrokubi, 2006) have informed my position on creating experiences with youths that embody mutuality in learning, leadership, and participation. Similarly, ideas from liberatory education (Freire, 1999; hooks, 1994) have further fueled my commitment to practices that are transparent, responsive, and reciprocal.

Finally, my training as a narrative therapist contributes immensely to my resolve to stay reflexively engaged with issues of representation, inclusion, and power. As a narrative therapist, I owe much to pioneers in cultural anthropology. For example, Bruner (1986a, 1986b) challenged the distinction between researcher and researched, paving the way for a therapeutic practice premised on "co-research" (Epston, 1999) that is at the heart of narrative therapy. Geertz (1973, 1985) suggested that the anthropologist's task is to bring forward insider knowledges and to invite "thick descriptions,"[7] a practice essential to narrative therapy that I also place at the center of research.

Interestingly, many therapists espouse an unyielding postmodern ethic—up to the point of research. This kind of theoretical incoherence is somehow rationalized by the hegemonic status of the scientific method. For me, this begs a litany of questions, such as

- How can one espouse a constructionist philosophy and embrace the practices informed by it up to the point of research and then abandon those ideas as summarily inappropriate, less than, useless, and meaningless when it comes to research?
- What does one's willingness to renounce postmodern principles and relational ethics when it comes to research suggest about one's relationship with their postmodern principles and ethics?
- Isn't a cornerstone of the postmodern project to unhinge the unquestioned authority embedded within language and move from fixed to fluid, rigid to pliable to make room for a proliferation of possibilities, including (especially?) those from nondominant locations or with nonorthodox ways?

[7] Geertz, in introducing this term to ethnographic research, credits Ryle (1949) with the original usage. *Thick description* refers to a situated description that extends beyond observation of behavior to one which brings forward the meaning and significance of what is described.

- Who benefits and who suffers from the accepted construction of legitimate versus illegitimate research?
- How did "research" become synonymous with "empiricism" and exclusive of all other forms of knowledge?

Questions such as these can help to further deconstruct the assumed superiority and universality of modernist epistemologies and methodologies, and thus create space for other forms of inquiry.

Queer Theory, Radical Research

Because this research was an inquiry with queer youths about how they construct a queer identity, finding a methodology that was culturally consonant required a queer process.[8] I wanted to engage in an inquiry process that would be both philosophically congruent with the basic tenets of queer as well as resonant with queer youths' lives. This was not merely for purposes of theoretical consistency; it also was about creating a process that would be accountable to and inclusive of the queer lives of the youths with whom I would be working. This act alone would stand in opposition to standard research practices and, as such, would embrace a queer politic of resisting norms. Similarly, *to queer* something is an emergent process of disrupting expected norms in such a way that, while new possibilities unfold, standard practices—reified through discourse and methodically unquestioned—become open for interrogation. Thus, a queered research is not for queers only. It is for those who seek to resist the normalizing project of modernity and exercise power through the discursive production of emergent narratives.

Halberstam (1998) provided a critical treatment of what a queer methodology might entail in her description of her interdisciplinary research. Queer methodology, according to Halberstam, "attempts to remain supple enough to respond to the various locations of information . . . and betrays a certain disloyalty to conventional disciplinary methods" (p. 10). Halberstam maintained that central to the queerness of such a methodology is its refusal to participate in conventional methodologies. Furthermore, Halberstam suggested that a "queer methodology . . . is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies. . . . Queer methodology . . . refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence" (p. 13). Halbertam's articulation reflects both a *queer methodology*—one that embodies fluidity and refusal to be clearly defined in accepted (acceptable?) terms—and a *queering of methodology*: an emergent process of troubling standard practices.

Whereas Halberstam is guided by disciplinary "disloyalty" as a matter of political resistance, Parker (2005) argued against fidelity to a particular methodology on the

[8] *Queer* is a critique of identity categories, an act of resistance against naming and dividing practices that demand stable, essentialist binary notions of identity. Also, *queer* stands in opposition to "normal" (Warner, 1999) as a political statement and embodiment of resistance. Thus, queer research will not be compliantly constrained within the methodological parameters of a particular research methodology.

basis of a rather resistant and queered version of best practice. Asserting that "the best research does not allow itself to be defined by its methodology alone" (p. 11), Parker campaigned for a dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981) process characterized by collective participation. A dialogical methodology invites us to ignore/blur boundaries between different approaches to create a process that emerges relationally among coresearchers. Such a process is constituted in the interview process, taking pieces of certain methods that invite conversations that are meaningful to participants and refusing to be limited by maintaining fidelity to one method.

Parker (2005) staked his position, in part, on the same theoretical ground that undergirds queer theory: feminism and the work of Foucault (1978b, 1985). Noting that feminist theory (for example, Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1987; Rowbotham, Segal, & Wainwright, 2013) has provided the most significant innovation in qualitative research, Parker highlights the illumination of power available through feminist analysis. Parker stated that the feminist assertion that "knowledge is different for the powerful than it is for the oppressed" is the "key methodological point" (p. 2). Whose knowledge will be privileged in any given inquiry becomes a political and ethical question. In my inquiry, I attempted to create a process that would center the knowledges of queer youths, a constituency whose knowledges typically are not privileged.

Parker also points to Foucault's ideas about the production of knowledge, or how we know what we know. Foucault (1978a, 1978b; Gordon, 1980; Morris & Patton, 1988) argued that history is always represented through a contemporary lens. This serves to legitimate what we do and how we think about things. Professional disciplines and traditional research methodologies function as what Foucault (1978a) called "regimes of truth" that circulate knowledge produced by the practices through which they are known. Thus, the production of knowledge becomes even more important than the knowledge itself. The research implication of a Foucauldian analysis of knowledge production asserts that it is more critical to focus on the "*process of research rather than the objects we attempt to know*" (Parker, 2005, p. 3). Parker's favoring of a feminist critique and a Foucauldian analysis points to a radical shift from conventional power operations of research methodologies.

PART 2: THE STORY OF THIS RE-METHODOLOGY

Part 1 outlined the philosophical and theoretical foundations that inform re-methodologizing research and how power relations are understood. Part 2 tells the story of the research project with a group of queer youths in which these ideas were put into action.

Language

Rejecting the use of the term "subject" (a misnomer even in traditional research, as subjects really serve as objects of study) for "participant" or "coresearcher" better reflects the collaborative and relational nature of both the ethic and the practice of this research.

I referred to the group of youths who worked with me as "the research team" as it felt more inclusive and representative of my hopes that collectively we would all experience the endeavor as something that needed each of us, if in differing capacities. I was clear in my head and my gut that they were not objects of study, and I fully believed that we all had things to teach and learn from each other. As the process unfolded, there were ways in which the language became more and more cumbersome for the simple yet significant reason that the relationships I was developing were becoming ones for which I felt great fondness. These were the individual relationships I was in with Daniel, Roberto, Marco, Carly, and Sophie.[9] And, it was the relationship I had with the collective: who we were as a gathering of six people, embodying the axiom, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

As a result of the connection I had with the group and the five youths who comprised it, I named the team *The Q-Squad*.[10] Our mission: to engage in a queering[11] process that destabilizes traditional understandings of research to privilege the knowledges and lived experiences of queer-identified youths in a way that is coherent in its methodology with those experiences. The Q-Squad functioned as (a) a signifier describing the wholeness that was produced by our coming together; (b) an expression of my affection for the individuals, the group, and the process; and (c) sense of irony and humor to an endeavor that is typically wrought with inflexibility and self-importance.

The Creation of The Q-Squad

An inquiry based on insider knowledges required some insiders to recruit a research team. I borrowed on my relationship with Carly and Sophie, two queer youths I had met previously at a queer youth camp. Carly had graduated with her degree in women's and gender studies, and Sophie was in her last year of the same program. As such, they brought with them a combination of insider knowledges and academic literacies, the two discursive frames that would inform the dissertation.

We met to talk about moving forward. Of particular interest to them was the focus on homonormativity.[12] Sophie and Carly both thought that this focus would bring a critical edge to the conversation, and they saw value in bringing forward queer youth resistance to homonormativity because they both were living that struggle.

Sophie and Carly were also interested in influencing the process of the inquiry. Together, we identified broad topic areas of discussion, including ideas about queer

[9] These are pseudonyms.

[10] For a full description of each Q-Squad member, as written by each of the youths, see Tilsen (2010) and Tilsen (2013).

[11] I think of "queering" as an action that is always occurring, never complete, defined nor definitive, rather than as the adjective "queer" that describes a fixed process.

[12] Homonormativity (Duggan, 2002) describes "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (p. 179).

identity and homonormativity, sex, experiences with therapists, and pop culture. These would end up guiding the inquiry meetings and serving as the chapters of the dissertation. We also discussed providing ways for the reflections and feedback of the research team members to be written in response to my writing. For me, including their writing served as an act of accountability: Asking them to author responses to what I have written served as a further privileging of their voices. It also extended the conversation in both content and process, furthering the possibility for the generation of ideas. In addition, the inclusion of research participants' comments in the final document continued the project of destabilizing traditional notions of research that privilege so-called expert knowledge. And, as such, it's a queer practice.[13]

During our planning meeting, we discussed issues of representation and safety in consideration of whom to invite to join us. For example, we talked about wanting to include queer youths from a variety of social locations while also being mindful about the experience of "being the only one" in a group. One idea they offered to mediate this was to organize a group of participants who knew each other and who would agree collectively to form the team. This way, we speculated, individual participants might find some support and safety already embedded within their relationships with each other. Also, we agreed that, although representation is important in a queer conversation about homonormativity (given that homonormativity embodies a middle-class, white, consumer-culture experience), we didn't want the group to become unwieldy in numbers. We fully realized that there was no such thing as full representation of every possible social location. The focus of the inquiry and its limitation could be named, and we still could assemble a group that offered diverse perspectives.

They contacted three friends who they thought would be interested in participating and who would represent various queer ways of being. This included a pair of siblings, Marco and Roberto, and another mutual friend, Daniel, who also happened to be Marco's roommate. When we met, I was interested in finding out why they were interested in participating in the research. Here are some of their comments from that meeting:

- Everyone I know has different experiences; no one is the same.
- I don't see myself represented in a lot of the TV shows and movies about gay people.
- It's about time people had a better grasp of who queer youth are.
- The stereotype is that we're defined by the bar. I could never define myself there. (Tilsen, 2010, p. 69)

We discussed anonymity. All five participants wanted to have their names associated with their comments. They were clear that they felt that "having a voice" also included claiming their voice. I assured them that we would revisit this before the ink was dry and the document sent to press. Parker (2005) challenged the research practice of maintaining anonymity as a matter of convenience, not ethics.

[13] Sophie and Carly wrote reflections/responses that were published in my dissertation and book.

> To conceal the identity of research participants might be the most convenient and easiest option, but not actually the most ethical one. One of the effects of the attempt to conceal a participant's identity is that they are thereby denied the very voice in the research that might originally have been claimed as its aim. It confirms one of the prevalent images of those who are researched by psychologists as fragile beings needing to be protected by others (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 17).

Each of the five youths participating wrote a brief biography that was included in the dissertation. All statements from the inquiry process used in the text were attributed to the youths who made them.

I introduced the idea of having them contribute by generating some questions that they would like to speak to and that would help organize the conversations. They were not particularly interested in generating questions, preferring to "just have a conversation." We talked about what a queer methodology might be, and I explained that there really wasn't much about that in the literature. We agreed that what we would be venturing into together would indeed be queer in method, if for no other reason than "queer doesn't follow the rules" (Tilsen, 2010, p. 70).

Setting

At the initial meeting, I checked to see if they would be comfortable meeting at my house, and whether the location was accessible for them. They agreed to meet at my house. I told them that I would compensate them financially and that I would feed them each time we met. Although I fully believed that "compensation" would be experienced through meaningful change for each individual (myself included), I also knew that I was the one who would walk away with at least two things that carry economic value in our culture: an advanced degree and a publishable document. It was important to me, as a practice of accountability, to respect their time and contributions in a similar way.

Meeting at my house (cats curled up on the couch), sharing food, and lingering in conversation after each inquiry session created a warm, friendly, and queer experience that I came to love and now remember with affection. It also disrupted conventional power relations, and this did not go unnoticed by the team. Below are some of their comments about how they experienced the setting:

- It's a really relaxed setting. I'm really comfortable.
- I was thinking about this earlier as I was sitting in a café. If we weren't doing this here, like this, there's probably a lot of things I wouldn't say.
- I'd probably censor myself.
- Or, if we were at the university, doing it more traditionally, or if we were at a therapist type setting, like all of that can change the dynamic of it. I think this is an interesting way to queer it.
- I didn't feel like all day, 'oh my god I have to go and do this thing where I have to sit and talk.' I think it's energizing that we're eating and drinking and I'm happy to be here. (Tilsen, 2010, pp. 72–73)

These comments reflect how the relationship between the setting and the methodology were mutually influential and supportive of each other: The setting was both facilitated by and facilitative of a conversational space of inquiry that featured a methodology reliant on transparency, shared reflexivity, and a co-constructed dialogical process committed to flexibility and embracing uncertainty.

Process of Inquiry

So, what *did* we do? What did we talk about and how did we talk about it? For the most part, the six meetings were guided by the research question and the "topic of the day." As previously discussed, topics were generated in the preliminary meeting I had with Sophie and Carly. I often would reflect before the meeting on some considerations from the literature and experiences that I've had with queer youths to help me generate a few initial questions. Typically, these questions were to invite participants to talk about their experiences with or thoughts about the topic at hand. I would start with these, opening the floor for anyone to respond, and usually, a lively conversation ensued. Essentially, this is the dialogical research process described in Part 1. This process features

- Interviewees positioned as coresearchers
- Interview content and process negotiated with coresearchers
- Moving from individualized accounts to collective co-participation
- A process that emerges relationally and is constituted in the interview process (Parker, 2005)

Each member of the Q-Squad was sent a copy of the transcript of each meeting to review, and I began every meeting by asking if there was anything from the previous meeting's transcript that they wanted to follow up on or adjust. At times, when I had a particular idea that I wanted to ask about or, if I felt that we had drifted too far afield from the questions that were relevant to the research focus, I would attempt to be transparent and situate my question and comment for the team as I worked our way back. In this way, I attempted to balance cocreation and fluidity with the assertion of leadership and purpose.

Impact of the Inquiry Process

The efforts to re-methodologize the research were not lost on the Q-Squad. In our final meeting, I asked about their experience of the process, what stood out for them, and in what ways they saw it contributing to their participation. In the following excerpt from our last meeting, a discussion of safety serves to highlight what stood out for them around the process of this inquiry:

- Hanging out before helped.
- I think that it wouldn't have been possible to talk in that way if we had been just sitting down and go, go, go.

- I feel like I can remember points where we all interacted with someone else's comment . . . instead of someone saying 'this is what I think' and then someone else, 'this is what queer is to me' . . . it created its own life.
- I think that we met at your home and you were comfortable enough to have these strange people in your home.
- The way that you've been very welcoming and down to earth and personable, rather than being very closed off, and like, analyzing things. I think that really helps because it brings a really human level to it. (Tilsen, 2010, pp. 75–76)

The team's observations about how safety emerged without a formal discussion of it[14] may be understood in many ways. From my position as the researcher and facilitator of the process, their experience of the inquiry as safe enough is evidence that the efforts to re-methodologize the inquiry process and create a relational, responsive conversational space were successful—not only because of my efforts, but also because of theirs.

IN-QUEERY: DOING JUST RESEARCH

From Dialogue to Written Word

How did I use the words of my coresearchers? What did I do to ensure that the values and analysis of power relations that informed the project from the beginning are reflected in my treatment of the conversations? It was never my intention to collect data, analyze them, and render some kind of authoritative interpretation. In fact, I believe that the stories shared by the members of the Q-Squad *are* the analysis of their experience. I told the participants from the beginning that my plan was to pepper the dissertation with excerpts from the conversations. By placing their comments alongside the theoretical arguments I was making, I was hoping to bring forward the relationship between queer theory and lived experience, demonstrating how two discursive frames may articulate similar concepts very differently. The value of theory is found only when it serves to elevate the lived experiences and insider knowledges of marginalized peoples. I wanted to honor the authority of participants' perspectives by including their comments directly in the text.

My interpretation would take place in my selection of some excerpts and in my use and placement of them in certain sections of the document. I made these decisions primarily by choosing things that stood out for me as particularly poignant, provocative, or representative of a perspective that may not be available for many practitioners. I chose articulations of Q-Squad members' experiences and ideas that made queer theory more available and real, and which brought to life the process of relationally engaged identity construction. Finally, I queered the scholarship process and destabilized conventional power relations by including the written reflections of Carly and Sophie in the body of my dissertation.

[14] Carly, Sophie and I did talk about safety considerations when we met and talked about the forming of the team. This was previously discussed.

What was learned from this research? I learned that by inviting queer youths into a conversational space, new ideas for therapeutic practice emerge. These ideas include using queer theory as a theoretical resource that respects nonnormative identities, engaging in reflexive conversations, un-doing conventional notions of development and interiority, and de-centering adult/professional expertise. Conversations influenced by these practices provide rich discursive soil for the cultivation of power, as they produce a bounty of possibilities.

Just Research

Why do we do research? I do research—and I do it as I have described it here—to engage in scholarship that challenges the norms that legitimate certain forms of knowledges and knowledge production over others. I do this research because it allows me to stay grounded in my relational ethic of inclusive justice, experience embodied participation (mine and others), and participate in an "effort to resist the process of assimilation" (Diversi & Moreria, 2009, p. 178). Re-methodologizing research premised on queer theory principles of resisting normativity and allowing for the proliferation of ways of being makes social science inquiry a project of social justice. It is just research.

As such, the process of in-queery can serve to disrupt reductionistic and essentializing representations of marginalized people, confront the privileging of academic literacies over insider knowledges, and reconnect the stories of peoples' lives with their rightful authors: themselves. In this way, queering the research process is not for queers only.

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